

Host: Today, as part of our "My Health" series, we're talking about a chronic disabling disease of the nervous system that affects more than two million people worldwide. In fact, about 200 people are diagnosed every week here in the U.S. alone. Symptoms can range from mild numbness and dizziness to blindness or even paralysis. The disease is Multiple Sclerosis or MS. Doctors don't know exactly what causes MS but new treatments are giving hope to people affected by it. Today we're welcoming Dr. Mark Cascione, the medical director at the South Tampa Multiple Sclerosis Center in Florida to tell us about the latest research in treating MS and also here with us today is Bonnie Leedy who was diagnosed with MS at the very young age of 29. Welcome to the show both of you.

Bonnie Leedy (BL) and Dr. Mark Cascione (MC): Thank you.

Host: Thank you for joining us. Now, doctor, I want to start with you. Just for our folks at home who maybe don't know a lot about MS, just give us a brief overview.

Sure. As far as we know, Multiple Sclerosis is an auto-immune disease where someone's immune system incorrectly becomes activated to attack the body rather than to protect the body. And with MS, the victim of the attack, if you will, is the myelin and axons of the central nervous system, the brain and spinal cord. Depending on what part of the brain or spinal cord is damaged by the attack, people will present with certain symptoms, like you said, sometimes numbness, tingling, sometimes more severe symptoms like blindness and paralysis. Now, is it something that is genetic, how do people get MS?

MC: We don't exactly know but we do think that it's a combination of someone's genetic predisposition to the disease as well as some sequence or some environmental triggers that people experience early on, that for whatever reason incorrectly over-activates the immune system to attack itself.

Host: Now, you mentioned a few of the symptoms that people might experience, are there any others that people could recognize or should know about?

MC: Well, actually there are a lot, some of them could also include fatigue, bowel and bladder difficulties, weakness, walking difficulties, balance, loss of vision as you said, cognitive dysfunction, sexual difficulties and pain.

Host: Wow. Is there any...I know I said at the beginning of the segment that there's not a cure for MS, is there a way for people who have MS to experience any kind of relief?

MC: We really have come quite a long way in terms of treating Multiple Sclerosis, not only treating the symptoms from relapses, but also slowing down the progression of the disease itself. In addition to that, we now have some new medicines out there that can help treat some specific symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis.

Host: Now, this is where I want to bring you into the conversation, Bonnie. Dr. Cascione is your doctor - you were diagnosed at 29 as I said earlier - what has your life been like,

what has your experience been like?

BL: My actual symptoms started when I was 18 and I was going to college in central PA. I moved to Baltimore and I was a nurse there and after my husband and I got married I collapsed down the stairs and got diagnosed with MS. A year after my son was born I had a major episode and that's when I was paralyzed from the chest down. I went to the University of Maryland and saw one of the world renowned doctors there and they treated me, finally after 7 months I was starting to walk again.

Host: After seven months.

BL: Yes.

Host: You were starting to walk again, is this common with patients who have MS to experience things like walking problems, walking difficulties?

MC: Walking difficulties is one of the more common symptoms of multiple sclerosis. In a poll that was sponsored by the Multiple Sclerosis Association of America, it actually turns out that in over 2000 people who were asked, 87% of people with MS experience difficulty with walking to the point where it limits what they try to do in a course of a day and they may even choose not to do some activities because of difficulties with walking. We now, though, have a new medication that Bonnie started three months ago that can potentially help walking, in particular walking speed, it's called Ampyra.

Host: Ampyra, and you actually are on Ampyra, right Bonnie?

BL: Yes.

Host: What has this been like for you?

BL: I've been on it for three months. The first month that I was on it I experienced a lot of tingling sensation and I had trouble sleeping. But adjusting the times, because it's an every 12 hour medication, I was able to get used to it and within a month the symptoms went away. But I do take it every 12 hours, I have an alarm clock that's on my phone and I set it to remember to take my afternoon one, so I keep some in my purse and a bottle of water and so no matter where I am I won't forget to take that second dose.

Host: And now you're walking better.

BL: And I am walking better, I'm not using my cane as much, I can go across Home Depot, I can answer the phone before somebody hangs up. It's great.

Host: I'm sure that's incredibly empowering.

BL: It definitely is.

Host: To feel that kind of freedom again.

BL: Definitely.

Host: Now, doctor, is this medication appropriate for all MS patients?

MC: Not necessarily. The medicine is approved for walking improvement, for people with MS, and it was measured by improving people's walking speed. It is indicated for any of the four types of MS. But people should not take this if they've ever had a seizure before or if they have certain types of kidney problems.

Host: Certain types of kidney problems, okay, now as you can see there is some important safety information, including possible side effects on the bottom of your screen right now. Thank you so much for joining us and sharing your story, we know it takes a lot of courage to do that.

BL: Thank you.

Host: And thank you, doctor for joining us and sharing your expertise with us.

MC: Thank you very much.

Host: Now, if you want more information about multiple sclerosis we encourage you to visit [NationalMSociety.org](http://NationalMSociety.org) and for information about the drug Ampyra go to [Ampyra.com](http://Ampyra.com).

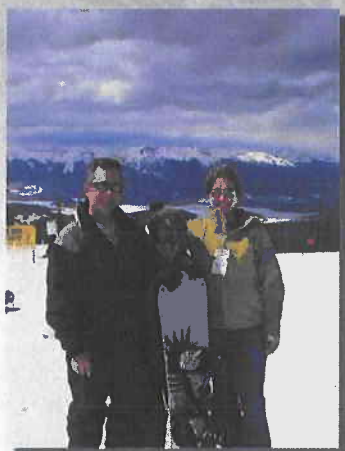
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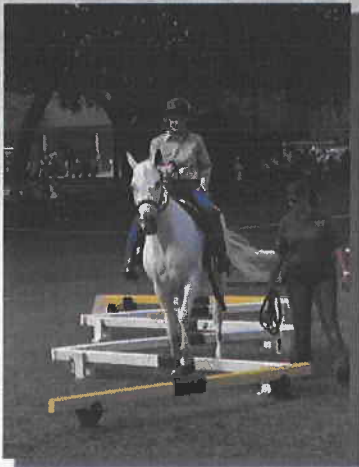
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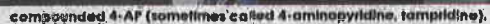
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**Important Safety Information. Do not take AMPYRA if you:**

- \* have ever had a seizure
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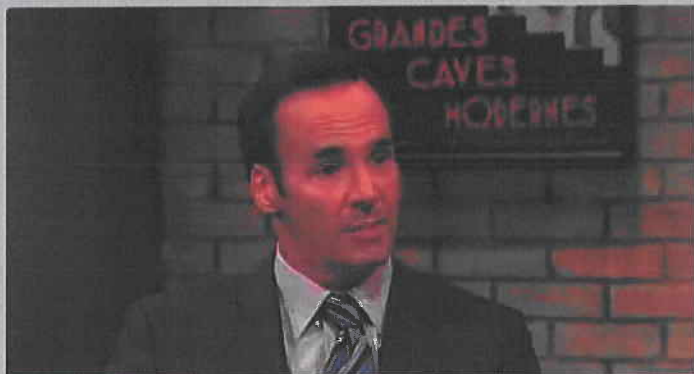


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Take AMPYRA exactly as your doctor tells you to take it.  
Do not change your dose of AMPYRA.

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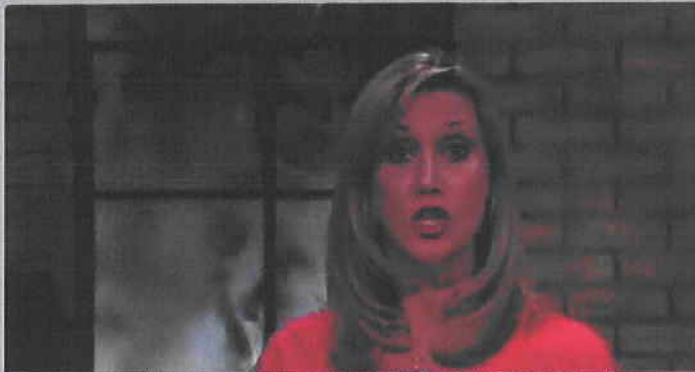
Take one tablet of AMPYRA 2 times each day about 12 hours apart.  
Do not take more than 2 tablets of AMPYRA in a 24-hour period.

Take AMPYRA tablets whole. Do not break, crush, chew or dissolve AMPYRA  
tablets before swallowing. AMPYRA is released slowly over time.  
If the tablet is broken, the medicine may be released too fast.  
This can raise your chance of having a seizure.

If you miss a dose of AMPYRA, do not make up the missed dose.

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Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.  
It is not known if AMPYRA will harm your unborn baby.

Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.  
It is not known if AMPYRA passes into your breast milk.

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**It is not known if AMPYRA passes into your breast milk.  
You should not breast-feed while you are on AMPYRA.**

**It is not known if AMPYRA is safe and effective in children less than 18 years of age.**

**For more information, please see the complete Medication Guide.**

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